

Wage and Hour Division, Labor

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taken only with respect to wage payments made under the Act to those employees whose occupations in the workweeks for which such payments are made are those of “tipped employees” as defined in section 3(t). Under section 3(t), the occupation of the employee must be one “in which he customarily and regularly receives more than \$30 a month in tips.” To determine whether a tip credit may be taken in paying wages to a particular employee it is necessary to know what payments constitute “tips,” whether the employee receives “more than \$30 a month” in such payments in the occupation in which he is engaged, and whether in such occupation he receives these payments in such amount “customarily and regularly.” The principles applicable to a resolution of these questions are discussed in the following sections.

[32 FR 13575, Sept. 28, 1967, as amended at 76 FR 18855, Apr. 5, 2011]

§ 531.52 General characteristics of “tips.”

A tip is a sum presented by a customer as a gift or gratuity in recognition of some service performed for him. It is to be distinguished from payment of a charge, if any, made for the service. Whether a tip is to be given, and its amount, are matters determined solely by the customer, who has the right to determine who shall be the recipient of the gratuity. Tips are the property of the employee whether or not the employer has taken a tip credit under section 3(m) of the FLSA. The employer is prohibited from using an employee’s tips, whether or not it has taken a tip credit, for any reason other than that which is statutorily permitted in section 3(m): As a credit against its minimum wage obligations to the employee, or in furtherance of a valid tip pool. Only tips actually received by an employee as money belonging to the employee may be counted in determining whether the person is a “tipped employee” within the meaning of the Act and in applying the provisions of section 3(m) which govern wage credits for tips.

[32 FR 13575, Sept. 28, 1967, as amended at 76 FR 18855, Apr. 5, 2011]

§ 531.53 Payments which constitute tips.

In addition to cash sums presented by customers which an employee keeps as his own, tips received by an employee include, within the meaning of the Act, amounts paid by bank check or other negotiable instrument payable at par and amounts transferred by the employer to the employee pursuant to directions from credit customers who designate amounts to be added to their bills as tips. Special gifts in forms other than money or its equivalent as above described such as theater tickets, passes, or merchandise, are not counted as tips received by the employee for purposes of the Act.

§ 531.54 Tip pooling.

Where employees practice tip splitting, as where waiters give a portion of their tips to the busboys, both the amounts retained by the waiters and those given the busboys are considered tips of the individuals who retain them, in applying the provisions of section 3(m) and 3(t). Similarly, where an accounting is made to an employer for his information only or in furtherance of a pooling arrangement whereby the employer redistributes the tips to the employees upon some basis to which they have mutually agreed among themselves, the amounts received and retained by each individual as his own are counted as his tips for purposes of the Act. Section 3(m) does not impose a maximum contribution percentage on valid mandatory tip pools, which can only include those employees who customarily and regularly receive tips. However, an employer must notify its employees of any required tip pool contribution amount, may only take a tip credit for the amount of tips each employee ultimately receives, and may not retain any of the employees’ tips for any other purpose.

[32 FR 13575, Sept. 28, 1967, as amended at 76 FR 18856, Apr. 5, 2011]

§ 531.55 Examples of amounts not received as tips.

(a) A compulsory charge for service, such as 15 percent of the amount of the bill, imposed on a customer by an employer’s establishment, is not a tip

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and, even if distributed by the employer to its employees, cannot be counted as a tip received in applying the provisions of section 3(m) and 3(t). Similarly, where negotiations between a hotel and a customer for banquet facilities include amounts for distribution to employees of the hotel, the amounts so distributed are not counted as tips received.

(b) As stated above, service charges and other similar sums which become part of the employer's gross receipts are not tips for the purposes of the Act. Where such sums are distributed by the employer to its employees, however, they may be used in their entirety to satisfy the monetary requirements of the Act.

[76 FR 18856, Apr. 5, 2011]

§ 531.56 “More than \$30 a month in tips.”

(a) *In general.* An employee who receives tips, within the meaning of the Act, is a “tipped employee” under the definition in section 3(t) when, in the occupation in which he is engaged, the amounts he receives as tips customarily and regularly total “more than \$30 a month.” An employee employed in an occupation in which the tips he receives meet this minimum standard is a “tipped employee” for whom the wage credit provided by section 3(m) may be taken in computing the compensation due him under the Act for employment in such occupation, whether he is employed in it full time or part time. An employee employed full time or part time in an occupation in which he does not receive more than \$30 a month in tips customarily and regularly is not a “tipped employee” within the meaning of the Act and must receive the full compensation required by its provisions in cash or allowable facilities without any deduction for tips received under the provisions of section 3(m).

(b) *Month.* The definition of tipped employee does not require that the calendar month be used in determining whether more than \$30 a month is customarily and regularly received as tips. Any appropriate recurring monthly period beginning on the same day of the calendar month may be used.

(c) *Individual tip receipts are controlling.* An employee must himself customarily and regularly receive more than \$30 a month in tips in order to qualify as a tipped employee. The fact that he is part of a group which has a record of receiving more than \$20 a month in tips will not qualify him. For example, a waitress who is newly hired will not be considered a tipped employee merely because the other waitresses in the establishment receive tips in the requisite amount. For the method of applying the test in initial and terminal months of employment, see § 531.58.

(d) *Significance of minimum monthly tip receipts.* More than \$30 a month in tips customarily and regularly received by the employee is a minimum standard that must be met before any wage credit for tips is determined under section 3(m). It does not govern or limit the determination of the appropriate amount of wage credit under section 3(m) that may be taken for tips under section 6(a)(1) (tip credit equals the difference between the minimum wage required by section 6(a)(1) and \$2.13 per hour).

(e) *Dual jobs.* In some situations an employee is employed in a dual job, as for example, where a maintenance man in a hotel also serves as a waiter. In such a situation the employee, if he customarily and regularly receives at least \$30 a month in tips for his work as a waiter, is a tipped employee only with respect to his employment as a waiter. He is employed in two occupations, and no tip credit can be taken for his hours of employment in his occupation of maintenance man. Such a situation is distinguishable from that of a waitress who spends part of her time cleaning and setting tables, toasting bread, making coffee and occasionally washing dishes or glasses. It is likewise distinguishable from the counterman who also prepares his own short orders or who, as part of a group of countermen, takes a turn as a short order cook for the group. Such related duties in an occupation that is a tipped occupation need not by themselves be directed toward producing tips.

[32 FR 13575, Sept. 28, 1967, as amended at 76 FR 18855, Apr. 5, 2011]